

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Status of Claims:

Claims 22 and 23 are currently being cancelled.

Claims 1 and 14 are currently being amended.

No claims are currently being added.

This amendment amends and cancels claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claims remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

After amending the claims as set forth above, claims 1-7, 9, 14-16 and 21 are now pending in this application.

Indication of Allowable Subject Matter:

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter made in the Office Action with respect to claims 22 and 23. By way of this amendment and reply, presently pending independent claim 1 has been amended to include the features of 'objected to' (and now canceled) claim 22, and thus claim 1 is now in condition for allowance based on the statements made in the Office Action regarding claim 22. Similarly, presently pending independent claim 14 has been amended to include the features of 'objected to' (and now canceled) claim 23, and thus claim 14 is now in condition for allowance based on the statements made in the Office Action regarding claim 23.

Claim Objections:

In the Office Action, claims 1 and 14 were objected to because of minor informalities noted on page 3 of the Office Action. By way of this amendment and reply, claims 1 and 14

have been amended to correct those informalities, in the manner as suggested on page 3 of the Office Action.

Claim Rejections – Prior Art:

In the Office Action, claims 1-7, 9, 14-16 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,798,905 to Sugiura et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,764,866 to Maniwa. Due to the amendments made to presently pending independent claims 1 and 14 to respectively include the features of their dependent claims 22 and 23, this rejection is now moot.

Conclusion:

Since all of the issues raised in the Office Action have been addressed in this Amendment and Reply, Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and an early indication of allowance is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicants hereby petition for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorize payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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